

what's up?

What's it all about?

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are infections that can be spread by having sex with another person who is infected. Many STDs are curable. Some have treatable symptoms, but cannot be cured.

STDs are often not recognized for 3 main reasons:

- **Many STDs show no symptoms.**
- The consequences of STDs such as sterility, pain, certain cancers and other chronic diseases may occur years after the initial infection.
- There is sometimes shame and embarrassment about STDs, so we don't talk about them.

sexually transmitted diseases

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

Why does it matter?

STDs spread easily

It is common for STDs to be passed from one person to another unintentionally by people who have no symptoms. Most people do not know they are infected.

STDs cause health problems

Untreated STDs can cause serious harm including but not limited to: sterility, pain, stillbirths, and cell changes related to cervical cancer.

STDs increase the spread of HIV

Untreated STDs, with or without symptoms, make it easier to get other STDs, including HIV. In a single act of unprotected sex with an infected partner, a woman has an estimated 1% risk of getting HIV, a 30% risk of getting genital herpes and a 50% chance of getting gonorrhea.

What are the details?

- In 1999, more than 5,500 teens in Washington state had a reported STD.
- Every year 3 million teens in the U.S.—about 1 in 4 sexually active teens—get STDs.
- The most commonly reported STDs for teens are chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital warts and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).
- People can have more than one STD at a time.
- Teenage women are more often diagnosed with STDs than teenage men. This may be because women go in more often for screening and because some STDs are spread more easily from men to women.
- 1,798 young people in the U.S. (ages 13 to 24) were reported as being diagnosed with AIDS in 1998, bringing the cumulative total to 27,860 cases of AIDS in this age group. AIDS symptoms generally do not show up for 7 to 10 years after exposure to HIV.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

What can I do?

When a teen turns to you for information about preventing STDs, what would you advise? Here are some things you can say:

- If you don't have sex (if you are abstinent), you won't get STDs.
- Having fewer sex partners reduces your risk—make wise choices.
- Many STDs have no symptoms, and you can get infected or infect other people without knowing it.
- Know your partners—go with them for STD and HIV tests.
- Be sure ALL sex partners are examined and treated if you get a STD infection.
- Birth control pills do not prevent STD infection. Use both condoms (rubbers) and birth control pills.
- Learn how to talk about condoms with all your sex partners.
- Learn the right way to use condoms. Use a new latex condom and a spermicide every time you have sex.
- Change the ways you have sex so there is less risk of infection.
- Don't get drunk or high before having sex.
- Don't use IV street drugs—never share needles.

Research on preventing STDs

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has concluded that early, clear communication between parents and young people about sex is an important step in helping adolescents adopt and maintain protective sexual behaviors.

In addition, the CDC has identified key components for STD prevention efforts:

- School-based programs are critical for reaching youth before behaviors are established.
- Programs should be comprehensive, include a focus on delaying sexual behavior, and provide information on how sexually active young people can protect themselves.
- Community-based programs are needed to reach youth who are not in school. Addressing the needs of adolescents who are most vulnerable to HIV infection, such as homeless or runaway youth, juvenile offenders or school dropouts is critically important.
- STD treatment must play a role in prevention programs for young people.
- Continuing studies which help explain why teens practice sexually risky behavior are needed.

**hot
links!**

Washington State STD Hotline 1-800-272-2437 <http://depts.washington.edu/ecctpp/std/stds.html>

STD fact sheet Planned Parenthood Federation of America, www.plannedparenthood.org/library/STI/STI_fact.html
Teenwire: www.teenwire.org/index.asp

I Wanna Know The American Social Health Association, www.iwannaknow.org

Washington State Department of Health: STD/TB Services www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/std/default.htm

HIV Prevention and Education www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/hiv_aids/Prev_Edu/default.htm

Washington State Youth Risk Behavior Survey 1999 published August 2000, www.doh.wa.gov/publicat/publications.htm

Facts in Brief The Allan Guttmacher Institute, www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_teen_sex.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Prevention Information Network-1-800-458-5231 www.cdcnpin.org
STD prevention facts-www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/youth.htm

What Teens Know and Don't (But Should) About Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A National Survey of 15- to 17-Year-Olds AMA Adolescent Health On-line, www.ama-assn.org/insight/h_focus/adl_hlth/teen/std/teen_std.htm

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